

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9 and 18 are cancelled. Claims 3, 6, 15, 16, 19 and 20 are amended. New claims 21-28 are added.

Upon entry of the amendment the following claims are presented for consideration by the Examiner: Claim 21 with claims 3, 6, 8, 10-17, 19 and 20 depending therefrom; claim 22; and claim 23 with claims 24-28 depending therefrom.

Applicant submits herewith a proposed corrected drawing schematically illustrating the second connector part recited in claim 20. Applicant respectfully requests entry of the proposed corrected Figures 3 and 6 according to the redline photocopy accompanying this response. Applicant believes the proposed corrected Figures 3 and 6 overcome any objections properly raised under 37 C.F.R. 1.83(a).

The specification is amended to include the required U.S. Provisional paragraph and to properly include reference to the schematically illustrated connector part. Applicant respectfully requests entry of the amendments to the specification.

Applicant includes herewith an amended Abstract incorporating the changes suggested by the Examiner.

With respect to pending claims 16 and 17, the Examiner suggests that the recited "electrically isolating" feature is ineffective unless the recited "installation" is conductive. Claims 16 and 17 depend from new claim 21 which is directed to an apparatus for mounting a connector part of a subsea connector to a subsea installation. The subsea installation is not part of what is being claimed, but is instead a use environment for the claimed apparatus. The electrically isolating limitation of claims 16 and 17 narrows the claimed apparatus to require that it be electrically insulating. This narrowing limitation is effective regardless of whether the installation is limited to one which is conductive. Limiting the use environment to a conductive installation is unnecessary. Applicant respectfully requests that any requirement for this change to claims 16 and 17 be supported by reference to relevant case law, rule (CFR), statute (U.S.C.) or MPEP Section.

Claims 1-12, 15-19 and 20 were rejected under U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,030,797 to Nieman (hereinafter Nieman). Nieman discloses a prior art electrical connector in which an inner part is compliantly supported against a mounting flange by a coil spring. The connector mounting apparatus is provided with inner and outer flexible rubber seals 29, 47 extending between the radially inner plug shell 31 and the radially outer cylindrical housing 21.

Rejected claim 1 has been cancelled in favor of new claim 21 which recites in pertinent part as follows: "said flexible portion defining an aperture which receives a radial extension of said rigid component." The flexible bellows seals 47, 29 disclosed in Nieman axially terminate in beads which are received in radial grooves defined by inner and outer substantially rigid components. Nieman does not disclose, teach or suggest the structures and relationships recited in claim 21. The arrangement recited in claim 21 provides a robust engagement between a rigid component of the apparatus and the flexible portion to resist relative axial movement while providing compliance between the radially inner and radially outer regions of the apparatus.

It should be noted that the flexible and rigid portions disclosed in Nieman do not require such a robust engagement because the flexible bellows portions 47, 29 are not the primary support between the radially inner and radially outer regions of the disclosed electrical connector. Primary support of the radially inner plug shell 31 of the Nieman connector relative to the outer housing 21 is provided by a coil spring 26 bearing against a spring plate 28. The spring plate 28 overlaps with a shell plate 32 fixed to the inner plug shell 31 by retainer nut 30. Nieman does not disclose, teach or suggest the configuration recited in claim 21. Claim 21 is patentable over the disclosures of Nieman.

Claims 3, 6, 8, 10-17, 19 and 20 depend directly or indirectly from claim 21 and are patentable for at least the reasons stated in support of claim 21.

Claim 22 recites in pertinent part:

"one of the first or second components comprising an electrically insulating component extending in the circumferential direction and interposed radially between the inner and outer regions of the apparatus so as to electrically isolate the connector part from the installation."

Nieman does not disclose, teach or suggest the recitations of claim 22. Claim 22 is patentable for at least this reason.

Applicant presents new claims 23-28. Claim 23 recites in pertinent part:

"wherein one of said first or second annular components includes a flexible portion defining a slot which receives a radial extension of the other of said first or second components, said flexible portion allowing relative movement between the connector part and the installation in use."

As previously discussed with regard to claim 21, Nieman does not disclose, teach or suggest the relationships recited in claim 23. Claim 23 is patentable for at least this reason. Claims 24-28 depend directly or indirectly from claim 23 and are patentable for at least this reason.

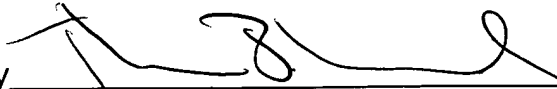
Claim 26 recites "wherein said flexible portion is a polymer molded onto the substantially rigid component." Nieman discloses the flexible portions as separate parts and does not disclose, teach or suggest that the flexible portion should be molded onto any of the rigid components. Claim 26 is patentable for at least this additional reason.

Claim 28 recites "wherein said flexible portion is bonded to the substantially rigid portion." Nieman does not disclose, teach or suggest bonding the flexible portions to the rigid portions of the connector. Claim 28 is patentable for at least this additional reason.

For all the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully requests allowance of independent claim 21 with claims 3, 6, 8, 10-17, 19 and 20 depending therefrom; claim 22; and claim 23 with claims 24-28 depending therefrom.

Respectfully submitted,

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FIG. 3.

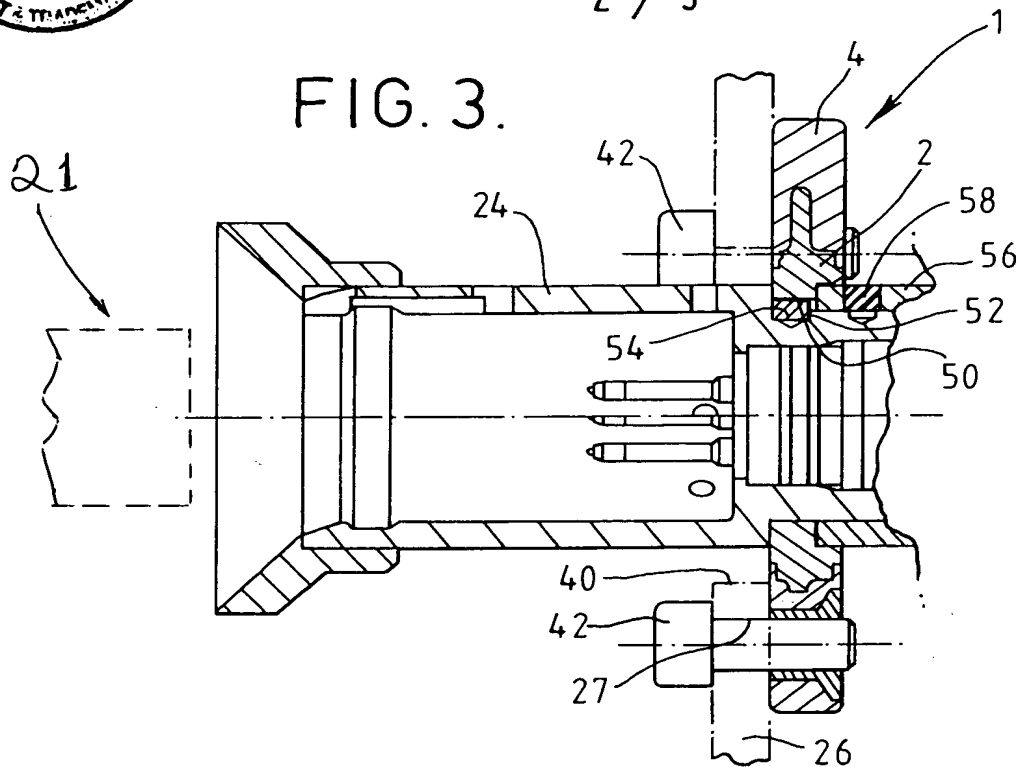


FIG. 6.

